Jny - 1/4/73

Entry by Invitation Only

Nixon's Guarded Camp David Is Veiled

By NORMAN KEMPSTED

CAMP DAVID, Md. (UPI). — The first thing a visitor notices about Camp David is the double fence topped with a special concertina wire that is sharp as razor blades and will literally cut an intruder to ribbons.

That is about all most people ever see of the Catoctin Mountain Presidential retreat because admission is strictly by invitation only and few persons outside of the administration's inner circle have been allowed inside.

Camp David, once the Shangri-La of Franklin D. Roosevelt, now symbolizes Richard Nixon's Presidency even more than the White House. The aura of secrecy and seclusion about the camp fits in perfectly with Mr. Nixon's emphasis on the surprising and the unexpected.

MR. NIXON was at Camp David last week when his press spokesman in Washington announced the suspension of bombing of North Vietnam above the 20th parallel.

Although the announcement was made in the President's name, Mr. Nixon himself had nothing to say about his reasons either for starting or stopping two weeks of the heaviest aerial bombardment in the history of warfare.

Aides, who refused to authorize use of their names, told reporters the President received clear signals from North Vietnam that the Communists were ready to talk "seriously" about a cease-fire. White House adviser Henry A. Kissinger resumes negotiations Jan. 8 but no one will know how serious the talks will be until they are under way again.

SINCE THE PARIS negotiations were broken off in mid-December, the administration has provided only sketchy information about its strategy and objectives. Mr. Nixon, who seldom takes the public into his confidence on matters of importance, has had nothing to say personally about the crucial war or peace talks.

Mr. Nixon has made no public speeches since he was re-elected Nov. 7 and he has talked in person to reporters just once — a late November statement on government reorganization, delivered in a helicopter hangar at Camp David. He declined to answer questions after his remarks.

His last news conference was Oct. 5, well before the latest phase of the puzzling Vietnam drama began with Kissinger's Oct. 26 announcement that "Peace is at Hand."

BY KEEPING his own counsel, Mr. Nixon keeps his options open. He can move in any direction he deems proper without having to reconcile new policy with old explanations. He could resume the bombing as abruptly as he started it Dec. 18 or stopped it

United Press International

Rustic Camp David lies peaceful behind a screen of heavy security

in Secrecy

Dec. 30.

No one can say if the two weeks of saturation bombing was a success or failure because no one knows what its purpose was.

Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said shortly after the raids began that they were intended to block a buildup of men and supplies for a new North Vietnamese offensive. When it became clear the next day that no such buildup was taking place, Ziegler amended his explanation to say the raids were intended to prevent the possibility of a buildup.

At the same time, anonymous officials said the object was to punish North Vietnam enough to force the Communists to resume peace talks.

MR. NIXON values the element of surprise in his diplomacy. He has said he wanted to keep his adversaries off balance and prevent them from predicting accurately what he will do in any situation.

Sometimes Mr. Nixon's policy of secret maneuver produces dramatic successses, like the sudden reopening of communications with China. But in Vietnam, the war continues despite a whole series of Mr. Nixon surprises, such as the Cambodia invasion, Kissinger's secret trips to Paris and on-off bombing raids.

When secret initiatives fail, they can produce a residue of distrust. Many members of Congress, including some who usually support the President, have complained bitterly about Mr. Nixon's decision to bomb without explaining his actions either to lawmakers or the public.

Mr. Nixon's credibility can suffer when drastic action is taken without explanation. The American public historically has lost confidence in leaders who do not exhibit some confidence in the people by producing convincing explanations of the reasons for